

DOS Review Completed.

WE KNOW THAT A NUMBER OF SYRIAN REGULAR TROOPS ARE ALREADY IN LEBANON. THE ISRAELIS ARE ALSO AWARE AND HAVE NOT SO FAR OBJECTED. PRESUMABLY THE SYRIANS MAY THINK THAT THEY HAVE SUCCESSFULLY DISGUISED THE PRESENCE OF THEIR REGULAR TROOPS AS PALESTINIANS, BUT SHOULD THEY HAVE TO USE THEM, THEIR PRESENCE WOULD BECOME KNOWN. HENCE THEIR WORRY ABOUT ISRAELI REACTIONS. IT MAY ALSO BE THE SYRIAN INTENTION TO SEND IN MORE REGULAR TROOPS. WOULD THE ISRAELIS BE PREPARED TO ALLOW THIS ON CERTAIN CONDITIONS, IN PARTICULAR, THAT THEY KEPT WELL AWAY FROM THE SOUTH?

2. PRESIDENT FRANGIE IS REPORTED TO HAVE TELEPHONED PRESIDENT ASA'AD IN DESPERATION YESTERDAY THREATENING TO RESORT TO OTHER MEASURES IF SYRIA DID NOT END THE FIGHTING BY DIRECT MILITARY INTERVENTION. THIS REFLECTS CHRISTIAN MILITARY SETBACKS. YESTERDAY I RECEIVED AN IMPASSIONED PLEA FOR WESTERN HELP FROM CHARLES MALIK (MEMBER OF KASLIK GROUP AND FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER). AMMUNITION WAS RUNNING OUT AND LEBANON'S FINAL HOUR HAD SOME. ASA'AD SEEMS TO HAVE REACTED BY PUTTING PRESSURE ON ARAFAT TO HELP BRING ABOUT A CEASE FIRE AND TO MEDIATE WITH JUMBLATT. ABU IYAD HAS GONE TO DAMASCUS THIS MORNING.

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3. REGULAR TROOPS IN LEBANON. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE FORCES OF SA'IQA, PLA AND SYRIAN REGULARS ARE SUFFICIENT TO ENFORCE A CEASE FIRE PROVIDED FATAH COOPERATE, AS THEY SEEM WILLING TO DO AT PRESENT. IF THE SYRIANS HAVE MORE FAR REACHING PLANS SUCH AS SORTING OUT THE REFUSAL FRONT GROUPS HERE, OBVIOUSLY THEY CANNOT RELY SO MUCH ON FATAH COOPERATION. KISSINGER'S QUESTIONS TO THE SYRIANS IN PARA 3(II) ARE HIGHLY RELEVANT AND IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW THE ANSWERS.

4. RECENT EGYPTIAN ENCOURAGEMENT OF FATAH TO DISSOCIATE ITSELF FROM THE SYRIAN POLITICAL SETTLEMENT HAS COMPLICATED THE SITUATION HERE. THIS TOGETHER WITH STRONG IRAQI EFFORTS TO SABOTAGE A SETTLEMENT MAY HAVE PERSUADED THE SYRIANS THAT THEY NEED MORE REGULAR FORCES FOR THE JOB. WOULD THE US GOVERNMENT AND POSSIBLY OURSELVES CONTEMPLATE RECOMMENDING RESTRAINT TO THE EGYPTIANS ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEIR ACTIONS WILL EITHER GIVE FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEFT-WING FORCES IN LEBANON TO STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION AND/OR LEAD TO STRONGER SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION?

WAKEFIELD

Dated 241045 Z

CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE SECRETARY

**RAMSBOTHAM SENT THESE OVER
FOR YOUR INFORMATION. HE
ALSO WANTS TO TALK TO YOU
AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

**Paul
4:30 PM**

No Objection to Declassification in Part 2010/11/15 :
LOC-HAK-161-6-9-7

Just arrived: Callaghan report on his
discussion with Gromyko.

No Objection to Declassification in Part 2010/11/15 :
LOC-HAK-161-6-9-7

FLASH

SECRET

COPY NO

CYPHER/CAT A

FM FCO 241830Z

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ANNEX REGISTRY

SECRET

UK/US EYES ONLY

TO FLASH WASHINGTON TELEGRAM NO 627 OF 24 MARCH
INFO IMMEDIATE BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV, PARIS,
PRIORITY CAIRO, AMMAN, MOSCOW, UKMIS NEW YORK.

[Undated: ca. 24 Mar 76]

YOUR TELEGRAM NO 1040: LEBANON.

1. FOR OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION PLEASE SEE MY IMMEDIATELY
FOLLOWING TELEGRAM.

2. AS NOTED IN MY TELEGRAM NO 621, I BRIEFLY MENTIONED OUR REPORT
OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS TO GROMYKO THIS MORNING, IN ORDER TO GIVE HIM
A CHANCE TO CHECK WITH MOSCOW, AND HE COMMENTED THAT HE HAD HEARD
RUMOURS TO THE SAME EFFECT. WE AGREED TO REVERT TO THE SUBJECT, IN
VERY RESTRICTED SESSION, BEFORE THE RESUMPTION OF OUR PLENARY TALKS
THIS AFTERNOON. I SAID THEN THAT WHILE OUR INFORMATION WAS NOT
FIRM EITHER, IT WAS BASED ON MORE THAN RUMOUR AND THAT WE FELT
BOUND TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. WE UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE MIGHT BE A
FEW SYRIAN REGULAR TROOPS IN LEBANON ALREADY (I HAD IN MIND BEIRUT
TELEGRAM NO 475) BUT WHAT WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT WAS THE POSSIBILITY
OF THEIR SENDING IN SUBSTANTIAL REINFORCEMENTS. IN OUR VIEW THIS
COULD WELL PROVOKE AN ISRAELI MOVE INTO SOUTH LEBANON. THE
CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WERE UNPREDICTABLE, BUT THEY
COULD INCLUDE A SYRIA/ISRAEL CLASH, WHICH IN TURN COULD SPARK
OFF A WIDER CONFLICT, WITH THE GRAVEST RISKS TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE
AND THE INTERESTS OF THIRD PARTIES. I SAID WE WOULD USE WHAT
INFLUENCE WE HAD WITH THE ISRAELIS TO PREVENT AN ESCALATION, AND
URGED GROMYKO TO DO HIS BEST TO RESTRAIN THE SYRIANS. THERE WERE
OF COURSE DANGERS IN BOTH DIRECTIONS, IE IF THE SYRIANS HELD BACK
THE PRESENT TACTICS OF THE EXTREMIST NATIONALIST FORCES MIGHT
CAUSE THE FIGHTING TO GET OUT OF HAND. BUT ON THE WHOLE WE FELT
THAT THE DEVIL WE KNEW WAS PREFERABLE TO THE CERTAINTY OF ISRAELI
INTERVENTION FOLLOWING UPON A MAJOR SYRIAN INCURSION.

DISTRIBUTION
CHANCERY LIMITED (CHL/ANX)
MR MUIR COPY NO 12
1052: ISD

/3. GROMYKO

ADVANCE COPIES TO
P.O. COPY NO 1
MR SAMUEL COPY NO 2

SECRET

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3. GROMYKO SAID HE DID NOT WISH TO QUESTION MY INFORMATION, AND WAS ONLY SAYING THAT THE REPORTS HE HAD RECEIVED COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED RELIABLE. THEY WERE BASED ON RUMOURS EMANATING FROM CERTAIN CIRCLES IN THE ARAB WORLD, AND SINCE THEY HAD BEEN PASSED TO HIM FROM MOSCOW OVERNIGHT THEY MIGHT BE ALREADY OUT OF DATE. HE ADDED THAT THE RUSSIANS HAD BEEN UNHAPPY ABOUT THE PREVIOUS SITUATION IN LEBANON AND THE SURROUNDING AREA, ALTHOUGH THEY AGREED IT WAS FRAUGHT WITH DANGER. HE UNDERTOOK TO TRY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH "SOME PEOPLE IN ARAB COUNTRIES" TO URGE MODERATION, BUT IT WAS HARD TO SAY WHAT EFFECT THIS COULD ACHIEVE. HE HOPED THAT WE FOR OUR PART WOULD TAKE STEPS TO INJECT ELEMENTS OF MODERATION INTO THE SITUATION. HE SAID, WITH FORCE AND APPARENT SINCERITY, THAT IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY UNDESIRABLE IF EVENTS GOT OUT OF CONTROL - NO-ONE WANTED THIS NOR SHOULD HAVE ANY INTEREST IN IT.

4. GROMYKO ALSO ASKED FOR OUR VIEWS AS TO HOW THE PROBLEM MIGHT BE RESOLVED. IT WAS ALL VERY WELL TO URGE MODERATION, BUT WHAT WERE THE CHANCES OF GETTING RESULTS THROUGH KIND WORDS AND GOOD OFFICES? HE COULD NOT HELP THINKING THAT WHAT HAD STARTED AS AN INTERNAL AFFAIR HAD BECOME INTERNATIONALISED OWING TO EXTERNAL INTERVENTION WITH THE RIVAL LEBANESE FACTIONS. I DID NOT DISPUTE THIS, BUT POINTED OUT THAT THE LEBANESE PARTIES THEMSELVES TENDED TO INVOKE OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE AND THE RESULT, IF NOT SELF-CANCELLING, WAS MESSY AND CONFUSED. HOWEVER WE BELIEVED THAT THE SYRIANS HAD ON THE WHOLE PLAYED A RESPONSIBLE ROLE, AND THOUGHT THAT THEY MIGHT STILL HAVE A CHANCE OF BRINGING OFF A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, PERHAPS THROUGH TOMORROW'S PROCEEDINGS IN THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT. GROMYKO DID NOT OFFER MUCH COMMENT ON THE INTERNAL SITUATION, AND I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN TOO WELL BRIEFED ON IT.

5. IN GENERAL I THOUGHT GROMYKO'S REACTION WAS FAIRLY SATISFACTORY, AND I HOPE KISSINGER WILL FIND IT USEFUL. I SUGGESTED THAT HE SHOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH THE AMERICANS TO EXCHANGE VIEWS, AND POSSIBLY ALSO WITH THE FRENCH IN VIEW OF THEIR TRADITIONAL INTEREST IN LEBANON. HE READILY AGREED, AND REPEATED THAT A MAJOR CONFLAGRATION WOULD BE DISASTROUS AND THAT WE MUST ALL GET ON WITH INJECTING ELEMENTS OF MODERATION.

CALLAGHAN

SECRET

1. THE STATE DEPARTMENT WILL OF COURSE HAVE SEEN OUR LATEST INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENT DATED 23 MARCH. SINCE THEN WE HAVE HAD FURTHER REPORTS FROM BEIRUT AND TEL AVIV (BEIRUT TELNO ~~475~~ 475 A ~~76~~ AND TEL AVIV TELNO 76), ON WHICH YOU MAY ALSO WISH TO DRAW. THESE LATEST REPORTS INDICATE THAT SYRIAN REGULAR TROOPS ARE ALREADY IN LEBANON AND OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THEY, TOGETHER WITH SAIQA AND THE PLO, MAY BE JUST SUFFICIENT TO ENFORCE A CEASE FIRE PROVIDED THAT FATAH CO-OPERATE AS THEY SEEM WILLING TO DO AT PRESENT.
2. WE ARE NOT SURE WHETHER THE SYRIAN MESSAGE TO DR KISSINGER INDICATED THAT THEY WERE THINKING OF MASSIVE OPEN REINFORCEMENT OF THEIR EXISTING FORCES IN LEBANON? MAY NOT THEIR APPROACH TO THE AMERICANS BE MOTIVATED PRIMARILY BY FEAR THAT THE SITUATION IS SLIPPING OUT OF THEIR CONTROL AND A WISH TO OBTAIN POLITICAL HELP FROM THE WEST, PARTICULARLY IN NEUTRALISING THE ISRAELIS?
3. THE ISRAELI REACTION TO THE SYRIAN APPROACH TO THE AMERICANS ALSO SEEMS TO ME A BIT EXCESSIVE, ALTHOUGH THE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT'S STANDING IS NOW SO LOW THAT THEY MIGHT FEEL OBLIGED TO REACT MORE STRONGLY TO SYRIAN OPEN INTERVENTION THAN THE SITUATION WARRANTS. I WONDER WHETHER THE ISRAELIS COULD NOT BE PERSUADED THAT A GREATER DEGREE OF SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON PRESENTS A LESSER THREAT TO THEM THAN EITHER CONTINUED ANARCHY THERE OR THE EMERGENCE OF AN AUTHORITY IN SOUTH LEBANON EAGER TO ENCOURAGE GUERRILLA ATTACKS ON ISRAEL AND IMPERVIOUS TO THE SORT OF SANCTIONS WHICH THE ISRAELIS CAN APPLY AGAINST SYRIA OR A RECONSTITUTED LEBANESE GOVERNMENT? MIGHT THE ISRAELIS BE PREPARED TO ALLOW MORE SYRIAN TROOPS TO ENTER LEBANON ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY KEPT WELL AWAY FROM THE SOUTH?

MARCH 24, 1976

FCO ASSESSMENT

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4. THE SITUATION WITHIN LEBANON FLUCTUATES FROM DAY TO DAY. THE SYRIAN EMISSARIES ARE BUSY TRYING TO ARRANGE ANOTHER CEASEFIRE AND THE COMBATANTS IN BEIRUT ARE WEARY AND SHORT OF AMMUNITION. I AM INCLINED TO THINK THAT IN THIS VERY COMPLEX AND UNCERTAIN SITUATION OUR BEST COURSE MAY BE TO TRY TO PLAY FOR TIME FOR A LITTLE LONGER BY DISCOURAGING BOTH THE SYRIANS AND THE ISRAELIS FROM EXTREME ACTIONS, IN THE HOPE THAT SYRIAN MEDIATION ATTEMPTS MAY YET PROVE SUCCESSFUL.

CALLAGHAN

Date 241830 Z

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huk

No Objection to Declassification in Part 2010/11/15 : LOC-HAK-161-6-9-7

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No Objection to Declassification in Part 2010/11/15 : LOC-HAK-161-6-9-7

CONFIDENTIAL

BEIRUT 475

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3. THE QUESTION ARISES WHATHER THE SYRIANS NEED MORE REGULAR TROOPS IN LEBANON. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT THE FORCES OF SAIPA, PLA AND SYRIAN REGULARS ARE SUFFICIENT TO ENFORCE A CEASE FIRE PROVIDED FATAH COOPERATE, AS THEY SEEM WILLINT TO DO AT PRESENT. IF THE SYRIANS HAVE MORE FAR REACHING PLANS SUCH AS SORTING OUT THE REFUSAL FRONT GROUPS HERE, OBVIOUSLY THEY CANNOT RELY SO MUCH ON FATAH COOPERATION. KISSINGER'S QUESTIONS TO THE SYRIANS IN PARA 3(11) ARE HIGHLY RELEVANT AND IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO KNOW THE ANSWERS.

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WAKEFIELD

Dated 241045 Z

CONFIDENTIAL

1. MR RABIN YESTERDAY MORNING GAVE MRS THATCHER A DISPASSIONATE ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION IN THE LEBANON, SAYING IN PARTICULAR THAT THE SYRIANS NOW APPEARED TO BE IN THE SAME CAMP AS THE CHRISTIANS AND WERE USING THE SAIQA AND PLA TO SUPPORT THEM. IN THE OTHER CAMP ARAFAT WAS RANGED WITH THE LEFTISTS AND KHATIB'S LAA. HE COMMENTED THAT THE ISRAELIS THOUGHT THAT SOME SYRIAN TROOPS MIGHT RECENTLY HAVE ENTERED THE LEBANON MASQUERADING AS SAIQA. HE SAID NOTHING TO SUGGEST THAT THAT SITUATION WAS GIVING THE ISRAELIS ANY SPECIAL CONCERN.

2. LATER IN THE DAY MR ALLON SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT THE LEBANON TO MRS THATCHER. HE SAID THAT THE SYRIANS HAD NOW GOT THEMSELVES INTO SUBSTANTIAL DIFFICULTIES, AND HE DEPLORED THE HIGH CASUALTY RATE IN BEIRUT. BUT HE DID NOT DISPLAY ANY SPECIAL ANXIETY ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS. (OUR TELEGRAM NO 231630Z TO MODUK INDICATES THAT THE ISRAELI MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AT WORKING LEVEL YESTERDAY WERE ALSO RELATIVELY RELAXED.)

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3. MY IMPRESSION HAS HITHERTO BEEN THAT THE ISRAELI CABINET MIGHT BE PREPARED TO LIVE WITH UNPUBLICISED INTERVENTION ON A LIMITED SCALE BY SYRIAN FORCES. BUT A MAJOR OVERT INTERVENTION WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE A DIFFERENT MATTER. ALTHOUGH SENIOR MINISTERS MAY THEMSELVES HAVE BEEN THINKING (OF MY TELEGRAM NO 70 TO FCO) THAT OBJECTIVELY THE SYRIANS ARE FOR THE MOMENT ON THE RIGHT SIDE ON THE LEBANON, NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE TO PREPARE PUBLIC OPINION TO ACCEPT THIS. IN JANUARY THE GOVERNMENT SAID FIRMLY THAT THEY WOULD TAKE A MOST SERIOUS VIEW OF ANY OPEN SYRIAN INTERVENTION (ALTHOUGH THEY WERE CAREFUL NOT TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO A MILITARY RESPONSE WITHIN LEBANON AND THEY SUGGESTED THAT THEIR REACTION WOULD DEPEND ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEIR OWN NORTHERN FRONTIERS WERE THREATENED). THEY WOULD NOT NOW FIND IT AT ALL EASY TO RECONCILE THE PUBLIC TO INACTION IN THE EVENT OF A MAJOR SYRIAN MOVE. THE TROUBLE IS THAT THEIR DOMESTIC POLITICAL STANDING AT THE MOMENT IS VERY LOW AND THEY HAVE ACQUIRED AN INCREASING REPUTATION FOR INDECISION. THERE IS THEREFORE A SUBSTANTIAL RISK THAT ANY SUDDEN ACTION BY THE SYRIANS COULD STAMPEDE THEM INTO TAKING DANGEROUS COUNTER-MEASURES.

ELLIOTT. DAW 241135 Z

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